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Rezensionen

Katherine Homewood (ed.): *Rural Resources and Local Livelihoods in Africa*, New York/Oxford, 2005, Pelgrave Macmillan/James Currey, 212 S., ISBN- 0-85255-916 X & ISBN- 0-85255-915-1

Africa's huge rural resources amid grinding rural poverty and worsening trend of local livelihoods across the continent, remains a fundamental public policy challenge for all, who are desirous of having its underdevelopment reversed. This book is partly a response to this challenge. It deals with the complexity of issues involved in rural resources and livelihoods, examines state-led protectionist and conservation policies in comparison with the traditional method of resource management, and looks critically into the poor outcome of western interventions in biodiversity and conservations. It analyses the crosscutting perspective on environmental change, conservation, biodiversity, land use, local livelihoods and the overall development policy of Africa. It contextualizes poverty beyond the 'less than one dollar' threshold to include its dynamics, target group, non-income and capital stock factors, common property resources, shaping livelihoods of the African rural poor. It adopts a multi-disciplinary approach [largely within the Anthropology construct] in interrogating these issues.

The Introduction summarizes the entire work, but fails to provide a theoretical context for the study, leaving the chapters hanging. There is also the need to deploy the resource governance approach, as it provides a holistic approach to resolving the problem of rural resources and poverty, while addressing issues of rights and access to natural resources, rural poverty, social justice and equity, transparency and accountability. Chapter Two examines the fuelwood-deforestation crisis in the protected area of Malawi-Lake Malawi National Park. Contrary to the widely held position of conservationists that, population increases precipitate fuelwood crisis, the empirical evidences refute such claim. While it might be right that the decline in woodland is a natural cause, the chapter leaves the reader wondering about its consequences for the local livelihood pattern. Chapter Three contends that, the state protectionist policy of evicting local residents in the Gambara Park of the Democratic Republic of Congo does not necessarily result in proper resource management. Rather, it shows that the implementation of hunting regulations by the traditional hunters accounts for the increase in mammal population. However, it suffers from poor narrative and empiricism.

Food-gathering practices among the Damara herders in the arid zone of northwest Namibia is the focus of Chapter Four. It contends that resource gathering is not primitive and backward [page 64], as construed by western development and conservationist agencies, but a combination of managing rural resources, social and economic livelihood style, and a crucial net for food security. Its clarification of rural resources as a means of livelihood in Africa is quite helpful in the new thinking of making 'poverty history' in Africa. Chapter Five deals with the contentious issue of community conservation and its effectiveness in the Mkomazi protected area in northeastern Tanzania. It argues that the ultimate motive behind the eviction of the local residents is to enable the political elites have greater access to natural resources, as evident in the state's collaboration with western conservation groups to the exclusion of community-based organizations in conservation projects, coupled with the denial of pastoralists access to flora and fauna found in their area. No philosophical construct is provided for analyzing the data and the narrative is poor.

The consequences of rising fertility on resource competition among the rural FulBe and RiimaiBe people, who are traditionally herders and farmers respectively, constitute the objective of Chapter Six. It argues that, social, political and ecological factors, other than increase in population, cause the breakdown of the age-long stratified production system among the people of FulBe and RiimaiBe. It shows that, the majority of the households adopted diversified economic systems whereby the FulBe combined herding of livestock with farming, while the RiimaiBe added herding to their traditional occupation of farming. Granted that these are changing environmental and resource dynamics and the strategies being developed to cope with the local livelihoods, the chapter suffers from a huge theoretical gap.

Chapter Seven looks critically into the consequences of the drought of the 1970s and 1980s for the general impoverishments of FulBe women, and the strategies for survival they develop at the house-

hold level in comparison with men, particularly the genderization of the ownership of cattle. It shows that, most women are marginalized and have no cattle. The data are somewhat outdated, mostly of 1995, coupled with a failure to suggest an alternative framework for empowering women in the pastoral activities. The role local institutions and people play in resource management in southwest Cameroon is the focus of Chapter Eight. It emphasizes the need to re-visit the narratives in a social and historical context, and raises crucial methodological question of whose perceptions really drive the debates between scientific forest management and the new development- or environment narratives. It fails to produce a mental construct for dealing with these issues.

Chapter Nine examines the many legal cultures of Cameroon arising from the country's colonial history-Germany and France, and the consequences for resource rights of the Nzime and Baka peoples and the Gbaya Boli of Bimba Canton in southeastern Cameroon. It shows that, while the Baka people are unable to attract more benefits from logging concession income, due to their weak political power, the Nzime people, with greater political voice, benefit more significantly from the income accruing from logging concessions. It is essentially descriptive. Chapter Ten concludes the work, but fails to provide recommendations on the way forward.

The book would have required updated data, as most of the case studies are a decade old. Furthermore, no theories are developed from the copious data generated. Notwithstanding the limitations of the book, it is highly recommended for scholars of Africa's political economy, donor agencies, civil society groups and activists engaged in natural resource agitations and development in Africa.

(Daniel A. Omoweh)

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